



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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HUNTING REGULATIONS PROPOSED FOR 1987-88 WATERFOWL SEASON

Duck hunting regulations similar to those in effect last year have been proposed for the 1987-88 waterfowl hunting season by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Proposed hunting regulations for geese, brant, and swans are also similar to last year's.

"This year's surveys showed that duck numbers are essentially unchanged from last year," said Frank Dunkle, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "It would be inappropriate to liberalize duck hunting regulations until duck populations show a significant recovery."

Duck hunting regulations were restricted in 1985 after duck populations fell to their lowest recorded levels in 30 years. The decline followed several years of severe drought in prime duck nesting areas of Canada and the North central United States. The restrictive regulations were continued for last year's hunting season.

Proposed duck season framework dates for 1987-88 are October 1-January 18 in the Atlantic Flyway; October 3-January 17 in the Mississippi and Central Flyways (October 1 in Wisconsin); and October 3-January 10 in the Pacific Flyway. Duck season lengths are unchanged from last year, and there are few changes in duck bag limits. Shooting hours remain from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. As was the case last year, there will be no open season on canvasbacks in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways because the eastern breeding population remains below the objective of 360,000.

In the Atlantic Flyway, the daily bag limit for pintails is reduced from two to one because of continued low numbers of this species. This is the last year of a 5-year voluntary harvest reduction program for black ducks, and the limit of one black duck and other restrictions are proposed to be continued.

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No change in the daily bag limit for Canada geese is proposed except for reduction from three to one in the Pennsylvania counties of Erie, Mercer, Butler, and Crawford to protect geese that winter in North and South Carolina. A special season for resident Canada geese is proposed in Massachusetts' coastal duck zone from January 21 to February 5, 1988. Limits are 5 daily and 10 in possession.

In the Mississippi Flyway, an increased harvest is proposed for Mississippi Valley population Canada geese to assist in keeping the population near the objective of 500,000. The proposal would permit a 10-percent increase in the harvest objective in each of the six States comprising the principal harvest areas for this population--Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky. This would bring the total harvest objective for this population to 143,000, compared with 130,000 last year.

In the Central Flyway, goose seasons and bag limits are unchanged except in Montana where separate and increased daily bag and possession limits are proposed for light and dark geese. No liberalization in bag limits for mallards and pintails is proposed, and last year's limit of three drake mallards is proposed for continuation this fall.

In the Pacific Flyway, limits on both mallards and pintails are proposed to be maintained at four in a daily bag limit of five ducks. In an effort to redistribute the limited harvest of Pacific brant, Washington and Oregon are offered 16-day seasons and California is offered a 30-day season. Limits are two daily and four in possession.

The proposed hunting regulations were published in the August 14 Federal Register. Public comments are requested and should be addressed to the Director (MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Matomic Building Room 536, Washington, DC 20240. Because of the need to complete regulations before hunting seasons open, public comments must be received by August 25.

Following the public comment period, the Fish and Wildlife Service will publish final waterfowl season frameworks from which the States will select their individual seasons. States may be more restrictive, but not more liberal, than the frameworks established by the Service. Final hunting regulations reflecting State season selections will be published in mid-September. Hunters are urged to check final regulations with their State wildlife agency before going afield.